

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15
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R 060320Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9779
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 1029

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFIP, PEPR, ASEAN, SN, TH
SUBJECT: VISIT OF THAI PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK - STRAITS
TIMES INTERVIEW

REF: SINGAPORE 0939 (NOTAL)

1. THAI PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK DEPARTED SINGAPORE
FEBRUARY 28 AFTER A TWO-DAY VISIT DURING HIS TOUR OF
ASEAN CAPITALS. TEXT OF THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT
CONCLUSION OF THE VISIT WAS FORWARDED BY REFTEL, AND A
WRAP-UP WILL BE SENT AFTER WE HAVE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO
DISCUSS THE VISIT WITH GOS AND THAI EMBASSY OFFICIALS.
OTHER THAN THE COMMUNIQUE, THE MOST INTERESTING PRESS
COVERAGE WAS AN INTERVIEW KRIANGSAK GAVE GOH KIAN CHEE
AND SEAH CHIANG NEE OF THE STRAITS TIMES ON FEBRUARY 27,
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CARRIED BY THE PAPER IN TWO PARTS ON MARCH 1 AND 2.
A SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEW FOLLOWS (FULL TEXT IS
BEING POUCHED TO EA/TIMBS).

2. WHEN ASKED THE IMMEDIATE AIMS OF THE THAI GOVERN-
MENT, KRIANGSAK REITERATED FOUR POINTS FROM HIS
DECEMBER 1977 POLICY STATEMENT TO THE NATIONAL

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY: "(1) TO CREATE THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE DEGREE OF POLITICAL STABILITY. (2) TO ACCELERATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY PARTICULARLY IN THE RURAL AREA. (3) TO MAINTAIN A MONETARY AND FINANCIAL STABILITY AND TO IMPROVE THE TAX AND DUTIES SYSTEM WITH A VIEW TO PROMOTING AND FACILITATING INVESTMENT AS WELL AS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, AND (4) TO EXPAND MARKETS FOR THAI EXPORT PRODUCTS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS."

3. THE THAI PM SAID THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO THE GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL AND HIS LEADERSHIP IN PARTICULAR "WOULD BE DISUNITY AMONG THE LEADERSHIP AND AMONG THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES." BUREAUCRACY CARRIED CERTAIN UNDESIRABLE ASPECTS, BUT THESE COULD NOT BE ALTOGETHER AVOIDED, WHILE VESTED INTERESTS AND OTHER GROUPS ALSO HAD AN IMPACT. THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IS, IN HIS VIEW, "TO TRY TO PROVIDE AS FAR AS IT CAN FOR EQUAL INTERESTS AMONG ALL."

4. ON COMMUNIST INSUREGENCY IN THAILAND, KRIANGSAK SAID THE RTG HAD ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO KEEP IT UNDER CONTROL AND CONSIDERED IT AN INTERNAL PROBLEM. WHILE SOME FORCE WAS NECESSARY, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD RELY HEAVILY ON ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT MEASURES TO COMBAT IT. HE ADMITTED THAT THE CPT MAY HAVE GAINED

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SOME YOUNG INTELLECTUAL LEADERS FROM STUDENTS WHO FLED INTO THE JUNGLES IN OCTOBER 1976, BUT SAID THAT MANY OF THEM HAD BECOME DISILLUSIONED AND RETURNED TO THEIR HOMES.

5. IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE, THE PM SAID THAT IN THE PAST FEW YEARS AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS AND SOMEWHAT OFFSET DAMAGE FROM HIGH OIL PRICES, WORLDWIDE INFLATION AND WEAK INVESTMENT AFTER THE FALL OF INDOCHINA. IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH INDOCHINA AND NEW TRADE AGREEMENTS WITH MANY COUNTRIES OR GROUPS OF COUNTRIES SHOULD HAVE MADE THIS YEAR'S PROSPECTS BRIGHTER BUT FOR LAST YEAR'S DROUGHT, WHICH WOULD REDUCE EXPORT EARNINGS THIS YEAR. HE BELIEVED, HOWEVER, THERE ARE AMPLE FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES FOR CURRENCY STABILITY, AND NOTED THAT A LOW DEBT SERVICE RATIO KEPT THE THAI CREDIT RATING HIGH.

6. KRIANGSAK SAID HE HOPED HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO CHINA "WOULD CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY AND BENEFICIALLY TO BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR GOVERNMENTS AND PEOPLES." HE HOPES TO UTILIZE THE VISIT TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON REGIONAL CONCERNS "THAT

MAY HAVE DIRECT BEARING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEACE AND STABILITY IN OUR REGION" (PRESUMABLY A REFERENCE TO THE VIETNAM-CAMBODIA CONFLICT). HE ALSO FEELS CHINA IS WILLING TO INCREASE TRADE. HE NOTED THAT THE PROBLEM OF A TWO-TIERED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTIES AND GOVERNMENTS HAD NOT DISAPPEARED AFTER DEVELOPING DIPLOMATIC TIES, BUT THAT THAILAND WAS TREATING INSURGENCY AS AN INTERNAL PROBLEM AND THAT BOTH COUNTRIES HAD ADVOCATED ADHERENCE TO THE GIVE PRINCIPLES OF PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE.

7. THE PM SAID THAT THE THAI BORDER PROBLEMS WITH CAMBODIA WERE NOT THE RESULT OF DELIBERATE INTENTION OF ANY SIDE TO CREATE TROUBLE. INCIDENTS BETWEEN UNCLASSIFIED

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NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES OCCASIONALLY OCCUR BECAUSE OF MISUNDERSTANDING, ESPECIALLY IN AREAS WHERE IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES TO OVERSEE, WHILE THE ABSENCE OF A CLEARLY MARKED BORDER ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THE MISUNDERSTANDING. THE THAI POLICY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH ALL COUNTRIES WAS CREATING A MORE FAVORABLE ATMOSPHERE, HOWEVER, AND "WE ARE QUITE SATISFIED WITH THE PROGRESS WE HAVE MADE THUS FAR."

8. KRIANGSAK DENIED THAT BANGKOK HAD EVER WANTED TO TURN ASEAN INTO AN ANTI-COMMUNIST DEFENSE PACT, AND DECLARED FROM THE VERY BEGINNING ASEAN HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COOPERATION. HE FELT ASEAN COULD BEST BOLSTER THE SECURITY OF ITS MEMBERS BY IMPROVING OVERALL LIVING STANDARDS. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE SAID, IT WAS LEGITIMATE FOR ANY TWO MEMBERS TO COOPERATE ON THE BILATERAL LEVELS AS IN THE CASE OF THAILAND AND MALAYSIA. AS TO INDOCHINESE SUSPICIONS THAT ASEAN IS AN AMERICAN INSTRUMENT, HE STRESSED THAT ASEAN WAS CONCEIVED AND BORN AS A TRULY INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATION AND HE HOPED THAT IN TIME THE INDO-CHINESE STATES WOULD COME TO REALIZE THIS. THEIR METHOD OF SEEKING BILATERAL TIES INSTEAD OF REPOND-ING TO THE ASEAN HAND OF FRIENDSHIP WAS NOT AN IM-PORTANT FACTOR, HE SAID, IF THE COUNTRIES COOPERATE FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT.

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9. AS LONG AS THE GREAT POWERS HAVE AN INTERSECTION OF INTERESTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, KRIANGSAK SAW A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE FOR EACH OF THEM IN MAINTAINING STABILITY IN THE REGION. AT THE SAME TIME, THE COUNTRIES IN THE REGION MUST EXERCISE GREATER EFFORT TO WORK OUT WAYS FOR LIVING PEACEFULLY TOGETHER. HE SAID THAT THAI EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH INDOCHINA WERE NOW BEARING FRUIT. WHILE THE SOVIET UNION HAD EXPANDED ITS ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION, HE BELIEVED THE INDOCHINESE WOULD GUARD THEIR AUTONOMY.

10. KRIANGSAK FELT IT WAS POSSIBLE AND, FROM THE THAI POINT OF VIEW, DESIRABLE FOR JAPAN TO PLAY A LARGER POLITICAL-SECURITY ROLE IN THE REGION. WHILE JAPAN'S CONSTITUTION WILL LIMIT ITS MILITARY ROLE AND JAPANESE PUBLIC OPINION WAS OPPOSED TO REARMAMENT, AS A GREAT ECONOMIC POWER JAPAN COULD PLAY A MOST
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CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY IN THE SEA REGION. JAPANESE CAPITAL AND TECHNOLOGY COULD ACCELERATE ECONOMIC GROWTH.

11. WITH REGARD TO THAI-SINGAPORE RELATIONS, KRIANGSAK

SAID THAT THE THAI GOVERNMENT HAD ALWAYS ATTACHED
HIGH PRIORITY TO RELATIONS WITH ASEAN COUNTRIES,
AND THERE WAS INCREASING BILATERAL COOPERATION AS
WELL. SINGAPORE'S TECHNOLOGY AND THAILAND'S AGRI-
CULTURE COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER AND PRESENT MANY OPPOR-
TUNITIES FOR COOPERATCON. ANOTHER AREA IN WHICH HE
BELIEVED THE TWO COUNTRIES SHOULD COOPERATE IS IN
THE PREVENTION OF SMUGGLING. ON INVESTMENT, HE SAID
THAT THE NEW INVESTMENT PROMOTION LAW GAVE UNPRECEDENTED
INCENTIVES, THAT THAILAND COULD OFFER CHEAP LABOR AND
NATURAL RESOURCES, AND THAT HE HOPED SINGAPORE INVEST-
MENT IN THAILAND (NOW ONE PERCENT OF FOREIGN INVESMENT)
WOULD INCREASE.
HOLDRIDGE

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